Dr. A. G. Menon.—You say that the Government have no objection. Is it an official committee or a non-official committee?

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—It is a committee appointed by the Government.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—Whether it will be an official committee or a non-official committee or a mixed committee?

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—I soppose it would be mixed.

Mr. C. J. Mathew.—I beg to withdraw the resolution on the assurance that a mixed committee would be appointed.

(*The resolution was withdrawn with leave.*)

4. Consideration of the Finance Committee report.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—In the light of the assurance, I withdraw.

(*Hence the following resolution was considered withdrawn*)

This Council recommends to the Government that the discussion of the report submitted by the Special Finance Committee be put off for the present, as the Members had not sufficient time to study the same and that the said report be considered at a special meeting of the Council to be convened at an early date."

5. Rural reconstruction in Cochin.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Sir, I rise to move a resolution to the effect that "*this Council recommends to the Government the appointment of a committee* (*the members of which will be named by the mover on the fate of the resolution being known*), *for the purpose of framing a comprehensive scheme of rural reconstruction for the villages of Cochin.*" I may, at the outset, state that, without a rural reconstruction scheme, all the labour that we do at the top is wasted. We, the intellectuals, the moneyed, are at the top of the social ladder and the work, that we do, must filter down unto the villages and should have a resting place there. But it would have been immensely better if we had begun from the foundations of village societies, and gone up towards the Legislative Councils. But things in this Country unfortunately take a topsy-turvy turn,and we begin at the top and go to the bottom. We have got no foundation. That we see in our social and political order. It is to remedy this that I have tabled this resolution. I know fully well the importance, the consequences and the advantages of village reconstruction schemes. I do not wish to take much time because we are on the last day and I want to give the others a chance. The condition of agriculture is of the first and prime importance in this land. That

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cannot be done practically by a small department consisting of half a dozen people, however learned, however enthusiastic, however qualified, however great research scholars they may be, without the improvement and without the co-operation of the villager, on whom rests the burden of raising agricultural crops in the land. Further the investigation into the condition of agriculture first (which will include the question of wells and other irrigational facilities existing in all the villages and their needs to be met), will be considered by the committee. (*Hear, hear.*) Further the question of ample pasture for their cattle will receive attention from the committee. It will also look into the condition of the cattle in the land. That dumb cattle creature question is absolutely not looked into at all now. Whether the cattle are growing stronger, whether they are given sufficient care for doing the work of agriculture for which they are intended, whether they are giving manure in sufficient quantity, etc., and all other vitally important questions connected with agriculture will be examined. Then comes the question of manure and manuring the land. Much has been said about the diminishing returns that will come from the land as the years go on and the pressure of population becomes severer. Therefore, the land must be replenished with sufficient amount of manure. I might say here that the great quantity of *punnac* that we raise in this country is largely exported to the great loss of the country. I would ask the Government, therefore, to pass a legislation here not to export our valuable manure which goes to the increased prosperity of our land.

Then I want this committee also to consider the question of increase or decrease of population and the pressure of population on the soil. I ask the committee to also look into the question of the economic condition of the villages and the banking facilities that are available in our country, to give the villager capital at very much cheaper rates. I would ask the Government also through the village reconstruction committee if it considers it proper the question of investing the Government balances and their surpluses into the villages of our country, rather than lock it up for the benefit of the Indian Bank share-holders or for the Imperial or National Bank share-holders. I would ask them to give loans on proper security for the purpose of reducing the indebtedness of the villagers and thereby increase the prosperity of the villager and the land. The question of unemployment will also be looked at. The production of food and other things, cloths or any other useful things that the villagers are making now and whether in what they are making any facilities can be given to them will also form part of this work. Even the question of producing babies by the villagers

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who are now propagating the species and who know only two things eating and propagating will be considered. At present, they breed, they breed and they breed, and if they continue to breed like that, the pressure on the soil will be so great and the progeny will not be looked after well. They simply create weakness for the men and women in our land. Now-a-days there is no delicacy in mentioning these matters, for these ideas are rightly spread all over the world.

Mr. Thomas Manjuran.— Without interrupting my Hon'ble friend, I must object to this. It is true, no doubt, that these questions are freely discussed in England. But in India, it is still in taboo. You cannot publicly discuss all these things. For, can you sell public conveniences for this matter? I would request the Chair to point out to him that that matter need not be referred to.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I don't see any point of order in it. So I would go my way.

Mr. Thomas Manjuran.—This is a point of decency.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—If you look into *the Madras Mail* or *the Hindu* you will find such things published.

Sir, it is not important. Accidentally I had to touch upon the question of creating babies and bringing out the progenies well. I did not want to dwell upon it. I am sorry that my learned friend has made it more emphatic. Otherwise, it would have been passed over.

The question of sanitation and medical relief in the village receive now very scanty attention. In spite of our influence and of our ideas in the medical institutions of the country, we know that not even one-tenth of the population get medical relief through the allopathic foreign method. Most of the patients are still hankering after their own country treatment. I say, therefore, this kind of medical relief also will be considered by a proper village reconstruction committee. The educational need of the villagers existing in all the villages, and whether all the children are going to the school and whether in a particular area compulsory education should be introduced, etc., will also come within the purview of the village reconstruction committee.

I pass on from the birth control ideas in deference to the opinion of my friend and come to the depressed classes in the villages, the so-called depressed classes. It has been stated, times without number in this House, that the depressed classes have no land. Whether it is possible in the reconstructed village to give them also their adequate due in the villages, that also will form part of the reconstruction scheme. Then, Sir, again the tenancy right of farmers and how we can get the best product from the soil by a system will also be considered. Then

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Sir, I come to the transport facilities existing. Whether we should do transport by means of water, by canals which exist in the country and which have all been abandoned again and thus bring to the land once again the easy communication idea of the ancient village as well as communication by means of road, motor cars, etc., will receive consideration. I regret to say that the abandoning of canals are now hampering communications. Beautiful canals from Cherai that used to go as far as Chellanam to the southern end of the State and which formed safe means of communication are now all filled up. Canals which give water transport facilities ought to be revived in the country and that is eminently a matter upon which the villagers should give an opinion. Sir, I come next to the revenue collection. It may be after this village reconstruction scheme is made, that you will be able to get your revenue collection without spending 2½ lakhs upon your Revenue Department. Each village can have the taxes that is due from the villages ascertained, and there may be honorary officers coming forward. In the Government of their village, old Panchayats may be revived, and they will, in every village, collect their taxes easily without any cost to the general tax-payer. The problem of teaching the villager, briefly, the condition of the enterprises and the growth of new ideas now surging in the land will also form another item. The much talked-of child welfare and the maternity welfare also ought to be investigated. The number of babies that die in the village parts under one year of age is terriblel I say they die like vermins almost, and nobody knows. When the village reconstruction committee comes, I shall give you the exact number that die in every village. It is also to find a remedy for that that I want this reconstruction scheme. According to statistics, the great mortality of people under one year is the greatest. Then comes the mortality under 5 years. Then comes the mortality below 8 years. The average life in India and Cochin is only 23 or less than 23, whereas it is 50 or 56 in England.

Mr. Thomas Manjuran.—Are we worse?

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—Will the committee of the Hon'ble Member find out that and reduce the death rates? Have you tackled the question?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—It is for tackling these questions that I asked for a committee. You know, Sir, that 8,000 people in Bardoli have been organised into a single unit by one single man, and I find that my friend has come to the conclusion that rural reconstruction cannot tackle with it. I am sorry for him and his information!

Then, Sir, the introduction of *charka* into the villages, how

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cloth can be made, how cheaper cloth can be supplied to the villagers is an eminent every day question of the hour. For our villagers can turn out with little more facilities cloths sufficient for their villages. Why should we not give them those facilities ? It may be the Government will have to give a little grant to encourage these things.

Mr. Thomas Manjuran.--Where is the cotton please?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—It is very well for you to say that you have got the tenant's interest, the population's interest and jeer at methodically earnest attempts made to give them their due share in the land ! The jeering of it is very sad. Public health and social structure need all these questions to be ardently and earnestly gone into by the committee. The death-rate, the welfare of the labourers of the villages, form another item, Sir. In Ireland, I may tell you that Mr. Cosgrave took charge of the land five years ago and introduced his village reconstruction scheme. I have got a statement recorded in my book here. I have taken the extract of the lecture that he gave in the United States of America, when he said that people of Ireland, after five years since the village reconstruction scheme was introduced, was better fed, better clothed and better housed. What greater comfort can any people or Government give to their own population? It is to feed people better, it is to clothe them better, it is to house them better that I bring forward this resolution for the appointment of a small committee. Sir, in this House, the Hon'ble Member for Trippunittura in the last Council had occasion to mention the number of people who have got houses, not even one foot above the ground. Can we with equanimity sit in this Council and say we will not reconstruct our villages ? Can we say that they may do as they like and live in water or just above the ground ? Can we say that we will shirk this question ? I ask this House to tackle the question most earnestly. You have done absolutely nothing in the last three years for the purpose of making the people live better and happier. Nothing has been done by that half of the House or by this half of the House. I tabled this resolution in the last Council with the hope that it will come up, but an unfortunate walk out came into existence, and I had to walk out and to allow this proposition to lapse, and I am glad at the very first meeting of this Council I got a chance to bring forward this resolution for the acceptance of the House.

Sir, it is with the idea, I may sum up, is to give cheap cloth and to provide employment to the villager, to give him free or cheap medical aid, to give him house at cheap rate, to make provision for children and their education, to give capital for cultivation of

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lands at cheap rate, to have an insurance and an industrial assurance scheme, that I tabled t his resolution. All people who have not insured their lives at least for Rs. 1,500 can only leave a sort of unhappy and miserable progeny behind, and it is most easy to redeem them from it. Sir I shall quote you one instance. I will tell you, Sir, the way in which you should approach the poor peoples' welfare question. For example, you have got hundreds of Rikshaw Valas going about in Ernakulam. Several years have passed since the introduction of these Rikshaws. See the miserable condition of these Rikshaw Valas! Many of them have not got, up to this date, a rupee to their credit.

Mr. Thomas Manjuran.—Are you sure?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I am sure. A man who had been a rikshaw vala for 10 years came to me and begged of me 4 annas for some mamudisa or vaptism ceremony. He had not enough money with him and he begged of me. I say, if there was absolute compulsion that they should save at least one anna a day out of their earning, all these people would have possessed rikshaws of their own now, and they would even have had a balance to their credit. Ask them to keep aside one anna a day. That means 30 annas a month. They have been working now for 15 and 20 years and they would have had a large sum to their credit. That is one of the methods of village reconstruction, by co-operation.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—Why don't you do it?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I have not got the power. Government has got the power. I want one minute more and I crave your indulgence. This a very important matter.

Now that is the idea. If he saves one anna a day. that will come to Rs. 2 a month and Rs. 24 in a year. This may be put in a co-operative society. Within 3 years he will be able to save some Rs. 70 or 65 and the Rikshaw Vala can have a Rikshaw of his own. If some 20 members do like this, in two months' time there will be Rs. 80 in the co-operative society. Give this money to one man and ask him to buy a Rikshaw of his own and ask him also to return the amount in instalments—the mere amount of hire of a Rikshaw which he now pays as a matter of custom and put it towards the cost of the Rikshaw. In Germany in nation building they have introduced this principle of compulsion. I wish to appeal to this House to appoint a small committee. If the House agrees to it, I will name my own men. I want men who are earnest in these matters. A small committee of not less than 3 and not more than 5 will do. They must go into the whole question and do all they can to relieve these

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starving millions. With these words I move the resolution for the acceptance of the House.

Mr. C. V. Kuriyan.—Sir, I rise to second the resolution. This is a matter which must engage the serious attention of the House. I may say that there is responsibility not only on the part of the Government but on all the Members present here. The real condition of our rural parts must be bettered. The Government have submitted a report on the rural reconstruction and sanitation scheme. But they have not taken any action on it. Students of Political History will bear witness to the fact that villages were the political units in our ancient Indian system. That has been the stepping stone for the advancement of the nation as a whole. Modern politicians are also reverting to that system. I say that a heavy responsibility lies with the Government since the major portion of the State revenue comes from the people in rural areas. The major portion of the revenue is Land Revenue and it is collected from the rural taxpayer. Correspondingly they get little benefit from the Government. I will advocate the system on two or three grounds more. If a village is taken as a unit, it may be made self-sufficient in several respects, and it will be very easy to administer to the needs of the villagers. The village members will take keen interest in all matters and will give proper advice to the Central Government. I may also advocate the system on the ground that it will develop the agricultural and industrial condition of the people at large. Now, as an example, I may say, we have been petitioning to Government to get certain irrigation facilities done for *kole* lands; we have sent petitions that a channel should not be blocked, etc., and for all these we get reply only after the harvest is over. There is no doubt delay on the part of the Central Executive not because they do not want to attend to the interests of the people but their work is top-heavy. In this case, if villages are made units, the Central Executive has only to supervise the work and can easily administer to the needs of the people of the locality. I approve the system on another ground. In every village you will find certain people who take some public interest in all matters, and if this reconstruction scheme is a reality, then those people will take lively interest in the matter and also they will get occasions to have frequent touch with Heads of Departments and the Central Executive, and just pander to their taste and pride, it will encourage their public activities. I am not going to enumerate all the advantages accruing from rural reconstruction. It is within our possibility. The advantages accruing from rural reconstruction are immense. The village as a whole and every class of society will be bettered. In regard to the advantages of rural reconstruction I think no

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Member in this House will have any dispute about it. But I am not one with the Member for Jews in teaching principles of contraception. I am opposed to it because there are more hands to work if there are more mouths to feed.

Rao Bahadur Mr. John Kuriyan.—I may say one word to what was said by the Hon'ble Member for Jews in regard to these rikshaw vala people. In Kottayam we have a co-operative society for Rikshaw Valas. I think there are about 30 or 40 members. But there is absolutely no Government help. The Registrar registered the society at the request of the members.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Who asked for Government help? I did not ask for Government help. I say if you compel people to do good things it is a good thing. Government is like the parent of the people. They must compel people to do good things.

Mr. K. P. Kannan Nayar.—On a point of information. May I know whether there has been any comprehensive scheme already drawn up by the Diwan Peishkar in reference to this very matter at any time?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—That can also be considered.

Mr. K. P. Kannan Nayar.—I only want to say that, if there is already a scheme before Government, I do not think there is any necessity for half a dozen Members of this Council to draw up another scheme. We have only to work out the other scheme. If there is already a scheme prepared by a responsible officer of the State, we have only to see how far that scheme can be worked out. Is there any scheme?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—The thing is Government schemes take a long time to be carried out.

Mr. K. P. Kannan Nayar.—My information is that the Diwan Peishkar has already prepared a scheme with reference to this matter. If there is already a scheme, why should we spend more money upon it?

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar.—Sir, I rise to support this resolution, and in doing so I shall be as brief as possible. I shall also try not to dwell upon the various necessities and remedies that are now suggested by the Hon'ble Member for Jews. I take this resolution only in this light that it is intended to focus or concentrate public opinion upon this important subject. (*Hear, hear.*) Sir, our population is about 10 lakhs and about 1 lakh of them live in towns. About 9 lakhs live in our villages, *i. e.*, 90% of our people are in villages and most of them live by agriculture. Of these the persons most benefitted are the money-lenders, the grain dealers and a few hereditary landlords. These may be about 5%. Then there are thus about 85% of the peo-

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ple who form what are called the masses. I submit that they are enmeshed in a net of abject poverty. (*Hear, hear.*) They are practically neglected. If our country can be compared to a building, our villages are the stones with which this building is constructed. If we do not care for them, if we neglect them, I am sure this building, this country, will tumble down at any moment. I think it is Dr. Gilbert Slater who said "India is not a country doomed to poverty by lack of natural resources, it is rather a country doomed to poverty because it has not taken the trouble to acquire the mental and moral equipment necessary to escape from poverty." If this statement is true in the case of British India, it is doubly true in the case of our little Cochin State. (*Hear, hear.*) The causes of this poverty are many. I do not propose to give an exhaustive list of them. The majority of this 85 per cent have no work, during the off seasons which sometimes come to 6 months in a year. I am not going to speak on my specific remedy which I am sure this House knows too well. I shall only try to draw the attention of this House to this important problem, the grave situation in which we find a large majority of our people. Our social life is also responsible for this to a great extent. Active worker, according to our social position, in a family is only one. All the others are idling away their times and think that it is the duty of the senior member to work for them and maintain them.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—Not after the Nayar Regulation.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar.—But this is unfortunately the social system in general. Even after the Nayar Regulation there is not much difference. Probably it shifted the burden from the *karanavan* of the family to the *thaazhi karanavan*. Our education, Sir, the faulty system of our education, has also contributed to bring about the present situation. We have a large number of educated people who have absolutely no work and who do not find any means of livelihood. We find them unfit for doing any manual work as they consider it beneath their dignity to do it. In fact, when they come out of their colleges or schools, we find them unfit to earn a living for themselves because competition for profession, I mean liberal professions and clerkships, for which alone they are fit, is such that they find it very difficult to get an entrance. What we find is that they also become unfit for their homes. They are not able to live the life which their elders lived at home. This is also a big problem. The low production due to poor health, the low stamina, the uneven distribution of water throughout the year followed by the failure of monsoons, more occasionally now-a-days than before, depletion of the soil fertility, mediocre varieties of crops,

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poor tools and methods of cultivations, high rates of interests and ground rent, all these have contributed to make the masses very poor. The problem really is a great one. Sir, we have to take it up, if not now, at an early date. The cry of rural reconstruction is also in the air. Many schemes are suggested in various places and new ideas are propagated, and it is time that we should consider the feasibility of particular schemes to a particular area. A small committee, therefore, is highly necessary. The maximum number that I would suggest is three consisting of persons who really sympathise with the masses, who sincerely feel for their sufferings and who are willing and have time to work.

Dr. A. R. Menon.—Where are the persons?

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar.—Are we devoid of at least three such men? This feeling of helplessness is another factor, Sir, contributing to aggravate poverty. The so-called educated people, people who are in power and who are in affluent circumstances do not care for them, do net even think of them. I am not asking them to spend money for them. I do want them only to spend a few days in the year in the villages, see things for themselves, ascertain their wants and think of the remedies for them. I would not have been here, the Hon'ble Member for Jews would not have been here pleading for a committee if there were persons who really felt for them and worked for them in the villages. If that had been the case, we would not have been here to ask the Council to appoint a committee to investigate the whole problem. We see that they are sadly neglected and we request the Government to appoint a committee, if possible, and find out two or three persons who will really work for them, who will go to the villages to see in what condition they are, collect the necessary statistics and find out some employment for them and suggest ways and means which will better their condition. I, therefore, heartily support the resolution.

Dr. A. R. Menon.—Sir, I rise to oppose the motion. Our past experience has not been very favourable towards the appointment of committees of this nature. The necessary qualifications enumerated by the previous speakers, gentlemen possessing all those qualities are very few indeed. In the second place, the mere appointment of a committee will not solve these questions. These are technical questions which ought to be dealt with by people who have got technical knowledge, and I believe Members of the Government have got more technical knowledge of the respective Departments than can possibly be possessed by the Member for Jews in spite of the great genius that he possesses in the line of argument.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I question that.

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Dr. A. R. Menon.—But, however, we are very glad that this subject has enabled the Member for Jews to entertain us this forenoon with one of his flights of oratory. It has served that purpose.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—Sir, while emphasising the necessity for absolute encouragement and improvement in various directions pointed out by the Hon'ble Member for Jews, I strongly oppose the appointment of a committee. In spite of what Mr. Castle Stwart might have said, I shall accept the dictum of one higher than himself. Sir William Vincent of the Imperial Legislative Council, said that "The devil invented the committee when a good thing has to be delayed or denied". Now my second objection is on the score of finance. I do not grudge the sitting fee of the prospective members of the committee, but I think it is an unnecessary drain upon our State resources. It is strictly on the principle, not that I love Cæsar less but I love Rome more. I attach more importance to the State treasury than to the emoluments of the members.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—He is bringing a charge that we want some money.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—Not that. Secondly, as I said, my objection is based on the ground that it will prove delay, and delay only. (*Hear, hear.*)

Mr. A. B. Salem.—That is when Government appoints committees.

Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon.—I question that.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—We find from the constitution of this Council that the whole State is divided between the 23 Members elected for the general constituencies. In other words 23 Members divide the territorial jurisdiction, as it were, of the whole country. Why not each Member do his own bit in these matters so far as it lies in his power? (*Hear, hear.*) Now our constituencies perhaps consists of 3 or 4 Panchayats. They have got units there. Why not approach the Panchayats and try to put them in a proper way thereby giving assistance, love and wisdom, if I may say so, to the Members who would really stand in need of these things in many ways?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Who is to do that now?

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—You do in your own way and I shall do in my own way. Therefore, it will practically be shunting the whole burden upon the Government. That will be avoiding a duty that is cast upon the representatives of the people. They ought to take the lead in these matters. Let the work be divided among the 23 Members or 30, and see what each can do, each in his own specified sphere. I dare say it will be a success by the conjunction of a few Members on the other

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side also. Why? By all means ask their assistance, solicit their assistance; certainly they will not grudge you anything they can do in the matter. This is an improvement which is called for on every side, and I am sure that each one of us can depend upon the ready assistance from the Members on the other side. We require most of all very probably, the Hon'ble Member for Engineering, the Member for Agriculture and Panchayats and the Member for Education and of course, though he is not represented here, the Departmental Head who is in charge of the Co-operative Society also. Certainly, if timely intimation is given to them, they will be ready to render you all assistance necessary. So instead of calling upon the Government to appoint committees and committees alone, it is the duty of the representatives of the people to see what each can do in his own way.

Mr. A. S. Harihara Ayyar.—Sir, I just want to take objection to one point that was advanced by the Hon'ble Member for Vyttila. No individual will take as much responsibility as the Government, and whatever comes from the Government, however simple it may be, it does more good than if all the people of the villages join together and try to do the same. To quote one simple instance in this respect. Now our Government has made certain rules regarding the Cochin Co-operative Societies, that is, the amount advanced to a party may be recovered without the aid of a court of law. This one single rule has developed the movement of Co-operative Society than any other. There was time when every debtor cared more to pay back his debt. It was a moral duty and for a debtor not to pay back his debt was considered to be a sin. Now all those days are gone. At present the legislature also favours the insolvent in so many ways. Somehow the above rule in society has marvellous moral effects.

President.—You oppose or support the motion?

Mr. A. S. Harihara Ayyar.—I support the mover. What I say is the help of the Government is necessary in all these matters. Our village agriculturists were paying 50% interest in kind. Now with the introduction of the co-operative society in the locality that system has after all gone. Those usurious creditors have reduced the rate of interest even up to 10%. Government is the only proper body to help in the amelioration of the condition of the people. I strongly support the mover either in appointing a committee or Government itself taking up the responsibility of this work.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I wish to know how the Government views the matter.

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Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—I shall require a little more than 3 minutes.

The Council rose for lunch at 2 p. m. and met again at 3 p. m.

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—Sir, regarding this resolution for the construction of a Rural Reconstruction Committee, I shall just try to explain the position of Government. We all admit that our villages are economically in a very poor and depressed condition. I do not think that fact is disputed by any one. Just as Members on the other side realise that fact, we on the Government side also are thoroughly conscious of the present deplorable condition of our villages. Now the question is as to what is the best method alleviating this deplorable condition. What is that we as Government can do or non-official influential gentlemen can do to improve the condition of our villages? Well, when you go into our villages, you find that our poor people are disposed to do hard work. They do not spare themselves. They do not take life easy. But by their hard labour they are not able to earn sufficient wages for a decent livelihood. They are in a state of perpetual indebtedness. Now what is the solution for this state of things? In the first place we would say that, if you want to raise the level of life in a village, the first thing necessary is to remove ignorance and to spread education—mass education—in the village. Members might be disposed to say that I am like the proverbial cobbler who thinks "there is nothing like leather." Whatever that be, so far as I have thought about the subject, I find the very first thing we have got to do is to remove illiteracy from our villages. We talk of Agricultural improvements, new methods of tilling, starting of Co-operative Societies for rescuing our villagers from indebtedness, the improvement of village sanitation, and so on. Well, none of these things can take place unless we give elementary education to our villagers. So that is the first thing that Government have got to do, and our Government is ready to do it within the limit of its resources.

As regards co-operation, if you look into the condition of the villagers, the greater part of them are cultivators and agricultural labourers; a smaller section are artisans. What we find as regards the agriculturist is that he is in a chronic state of indebtedness and the only way of rescue is by the development of co-operation. So also in the case of our artisans. We have skilful artisans, but in spite of their skill they are never thriving. Take our bell-metal workers. The quality of their work is good and so is the case of those engaged in coir work, different kinds of baskets and mats of bamboo and other materials. Well, the trouble is not in the people. They do their work. In spite o

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their skill and industry their level of life does not improve. It remains as bad as ever it was. I have looked into the condition of the villages which I have visited, where there are co-operative societies at work. How do the artisans and the agriculturists utilize the money that they borrow from the Co-operative Societies? They may try to clear their *munkadams* so that the advance received from the society does not go to promote the industry or the economic condition of the people. Or it may be they borrow money for conducting marriage festivals or other ceremonies. So the poor do not utilize it for their uplift. Formerly the villager used to borrow from money, lenders at exorbitant rates, 25 per cent and more. But he has now to pay only 10 or 12 per cent so that the low rate of interest is sometimes a temptation to him. These things are not so easy of solution as we might imagine. There must be concentration of the resources of Government and the co-operation of the local public. When I speak of Government, as Members on the other side observed, there is first the Revenue Department. In every village there are questions connected with the Revenue Department. And there is no possibility of improvement without their co-operation. Then there is the Engineering Department. There is the Medical, the Co-operative and the Agricultural Departments. These departments are interwoven and it is not enough if they act in isolation. It is impossible to tackle the problem at once throughout the State. What I would suggest is that Government Departments as well as local non-official bodies should select certain areas and they should concentrate their energies and resources and see how the economic uplift of the villages could be effected. The experience that we gain will help us to solve the problem in other parts. A committee was proposed by the Member for the Jews. A committee like that, where the conditions of one village are entirely different from another, how could it help the members to come to a practical solution? The co-operation of the non-official is absolutely necessary as the Member for Vyttila stated. Other Members were of opinion that it is the Government only that can do anything in this matter that would be really useful. Well, what has really got to be done is, I think, that Government and the public ought to co-operate and proceed step by step.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—What is the practical method?

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—I shall state a few instances. We have an Economic Development Committee constituted an year ago, of which I am President. We have been looking into this question, and what we did was this. You know we have village schools where there are teachers trained in Agriculture and Industries. Well, we had told these men

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that, if they used their agricultural and industrial knowledge for the good of the village, not merely by school work which is their legitimate work, but if they did outside work in helping villagers to improve cultivation and cottage industries and in trying to form co-operative societies so as to help these poor people, we would remunerate them. The Economic Development Committee received reports of such work done by several of these men in the course of the year, and we looked carefully into the work they had done, and we proposed the payment of bonuses to them which was remuneration for the work they did outside their legitimate sphere. Bonuses of Rs. 25, Rs. 50 and Rs. 100 according to the nature of the work done were recommended, and only the day before yesterday we received Government sanction. It is intended as an encouragement to these people to do good work. We have got half a dozen Agricultural High Schools with agriculture as an optional subject. The teachers are Chemistry graduates trained in the Agricultural College at Poona. We started the classes two years ago in these schools and the teachers have been asked to get into touch with local cultivators. We have demonstration farms attached to these High Schools and at first the villagers looked on the new methods with scepticism. But there was a gradual change in their attitude. They are slowly coming to have some faith in the methods pursued in the school farms. There is a demand for improved manures and implements. I am just now in correspondence with the Superintendent of Agriculture to entrust these agricultural graduates with a supply of implements and manures. We have been repeatedly stating here that demonstration in villages is essential. In a small way our schools are undertaking agricultural demonstration in villages, and if the Agricultural Department will co-operate with the Education Department, I think a great deal could be done. Now the Agricultural Department works independently, and they have been doing demonstration work spending large sums of money. But we have this advantage that we have our men on the spot. So that any cultivator can come and ask our agricultural teachers as to what he should do. So we are trying to effect some kind of co-operation in that way between the two Departments. Though much has not been done yet, we are gradually seeing our way. People cannot be made to understand these things unless we remove the darkness of ignorance. You must give them books and pamphlets to read and then instruct them by means of magic lantern performances in order to infuse in them new ideas. So, what I say is that it is not so much an independent committee that is required but a selection of men who can infuse in them the knowledge of these things

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and work on such lines. The Government should take the initiative. Our lands are fertile and are capable of yielding more. What is lacking is the co-ordination of the various agencies at work in the village. I told you the other day of what we were doing to get our graduates interested in village conditions, of the economic investigations that were being undertaken by our colleges. A new field of work could thus be opened for our History and Economics graduates who are now a drug in the market. They should be induced to go back to their villages. I have asked our professors to recommend those students who show some special attitude for this kind of work so that they may be put in the way of using their training and their intelligence for the development of the villages. In these ways tangible work could be done and Government would welcome the co-operation of the public, so that substantial work in the way of rural reconstruction might be done.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—How else can you do it?

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—We have to concentrate our resources and our activities—of Government and of the public—on select areas. We have to get experience and utilize the knowledge we gain for the good of other places.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—*Rural Reconstruction* is the watchword of the hour and is a subject which is looming large in public utterances in the press and on the platform. An enquiry into this question would, in the first place, demand a clear idea of what this expression 'Rural Reconstruction' connotes. It is an accepted maxim that the remedy for any disease consists in finding out and rightly fixing the causes underlying the malady; even so, in order to lay out a programme of rural reconstruction, it is necessary to find out first what is wrong with the villages.

The most superficial observer would be struck with the economic inefficiency of our village population. Put bluntly, poverty would explain all what economic inefficiency implies. Poverty is, indeed, a large problem; so ramified and complex are its causes that it is not possible to enter into it in detail without digression. But, apart from the large problem of the causes and amelioration of poverty, the basic cause of it is rightly attributed to the fact that "the people have not taken the trouble to acquire the mental and moral equipment necessary to escape from poverty." All that any organisation can do, whether Government or quasi-Government agency, is to help the people to acquire the requisite equipment.

The predominant feature of the mentality of the villager is the appalling ignorance which prevails. I do not mean pointedly literary ignorance, but want of knowledge of things which contri-

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bute to enonomic efficiency. If we investigate the causes which lead to economic inefficiency in the villages, the path to reconstruction will open out itself.

The foremost of those factors is *inefficient production*, which again springs from a variety of causes.

The second important defect in rural conditions is *want of co-operation*. Co-operation of the right kind would solve the question of rural inefficiency to a considerable extent.

Over and above the factors enumerated and, not the least in importance, as one of the fundamental causes of rural inefficiency, is *poor health and low stamina* of the rural population. My observations will deal at length with the improvement of this aspect of rural life.

Poor health and poverty are inter-related. Poor health results in poverty, which, in its turn, induces physical deterioration; thus one acts and reacts on the other in a vicious circle. That defective nutrition and low stamina characterise the physical condition of the masses will not be gainsaid. I hardly meet with a workman, be he a carpenter, sawyer, wood-cutter or any other daily labourer, working all the seven days in the week. They work for a few days in succession and then absent themselves complaining of aches and pains, or weakness. They feel the irresistible demand for rest which can be attributable only to their low stamina. If you come across a well-nourished workman, you may take it that his condition is maintained at the expense of his wife and children and female relations who stint and starve for the sake of the bread-winner.

Inefficient and defective quality of food then is an indisputable feature of village life, and *insufficient income or insufficient production of food* is the root cause of the low stamina of rural population. Closely depending on this factor *diseases of digestive system* such as *diarrhoea dysentery and worms* are perennial causes of physical deterioration and excessive mortality among the people. *Malaria* in the inland parts and *hook worm* in the coastal belt are potent causes of ill-health and premature decay. *Typhoid fever*, in recent years, seems to be doing havoc to the lives and health of rural areas as well as of towns.

Another scourge which is undermining the community in rural parts as well as in towns is *tuberculosis*. It is an increasing menace to the population, high and low, which the Government and the people themselves can no longer afford to ignore.

Infant mortality, according to the last annual report of the Director of Public Health, has been found to be 198·5 per million of births in the rural parts of the Madras Presidency. That is to say, one in five children born, perish before they

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reach one year of age. We may accept the same figure for our rural parts. Defective and improper attendance at child birth and defective knowledge of infant feeding are the principal causes among others of this appalling rate of infant mortality. Establishment of trained midwives in rural areas is the first help the State can render in this matter.

As for medical relief, extension of the scheme of State-aided dispensaries recently started seems called for to meet the needs of the rural population. One for each Panchayat area in the State should be the goal of rural medical relief.

By way of meeting the popular demand for Ayurvedic medical relief, I should consider that, in preference to establishing Ayurvedic dispensaries, it would be more useful and expedient to grant a subsidy to Ayurvedic physicians of repute and local popularity in rural parts to treat poor patients in the locality in which they reside.

I shall now deal with the measures to be adopted and the agency required to remedy the defects enumerated.

The frame-work of any organisation for village reconstruction ought to be the villagers themselves. It is mainly a matter of help. But it must be conceded that the mental and moral equipment necessary to shoulder the responsibility can only proceed from a knowledge of things which contribute to their welfare and to their ability to earn the wherewithal to attain to a higher standard of life. This capacity will not originate *motu suo* from the village itself. Extraneous aid in the shape of a governmental authority should be established in the village. Voluntary workers cannot get their will for common good obeyed by the people. We have the Village Panchayats to start with, but constituted as they are now, they do not possess the legalised authority to enforce their will in matters for common concern. Panchayat Regulation requires recasting to meet modern needs. They must have power to tax themselves if consented to by the people in whatever measure they like. Their mainstay will, however, be the contribution from Government, which amount they must have the power to pool with their own income and should be exempted from lapsing back to Government, if unspent; so far for the frame work of a responsible body, democratic in character, to shoulder the task of village reconstruction. At the infantile stage of Village Panchayats, they must be properly guided and controlled. Their efforts must be husbanded and fostered by Government on the one side and voluntary non-official bodies on the other. Considering that ninety per cent of the population live in rural areas, I shall dwell upon what I consider the duty devolving on Government.

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Apart from organised action to be taken through the Agricultural and Co-operative Departments foreshadowed before to counteract the economic inefficiency of the rural population, I consider that a properly organised Public Health Department should be established in the State. A Public Health Act based on the Public Health Sections of the District Municipalities and Local Boards Acts should be passed without further postponement. This Department, if properly organised, shall deal with all matters relating to the promotion of public health in the State and the prevention, limitation or suppression of infectious, communicable or preventable diseases and shall advise and assist local authorities in regard to matters affecting the public health.

I have drafted a sanitary scheme for rural areas, but it is only an elementary scheme, which will not be able to deal with problems connected with the promotion of economic efficiency. Nothing less than a thoroughly organised Health Department, working out the provisions of a complete Public Health Act, will be of any use in promoting rural economic fitness.

Ample provisions of good protected water-supply must form the primary object of attention of the State. Propaganda work of disseminating knowledge of prevention of diseases by all available agencies should be recognised as a definite programme of reconstruction. Greater attention to the teaching of simple hygienic rules must find a prominent place in any scheme of village reconstruction.

Government can only have a sound and thorough health policy and may have a well-equipped and well organised agency to carry out that policy, and the effective carrying out of that policy may gradually contribute to the improvement of the health conditions of rural life, but the speed with which rural uplift will take place depends on intensive propaganda work which voluntary social workers, obsessed with a burning desire for national progress and humanitarian enterprise, are found willing to do. The conscience of the enlightened public remains now dormant in such matters. It has to be roused until it becomes a motive force to shoulder such philanthropic responsibilities. This has been the case in all civilised countries. I think that in this matter also Government initiative may be wanted. For this purpose, a central Health Board to deal with health problems in the State or a social welfare league connected with health problems as well as those relating to rural co-operation, adult education, promotion of cottage industry and so on should be formed with branches all over the State in all important centres, and they must study local economic and health problems and devise means of remedying the

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same. I think an influential Central Board with a well-conceived plan of social uplift should be constructed under the aegis of Government. This is the only means of enlightening the intelligent public to realise what Government can do to the community and what the enlightened public will have to do for themselves and their neighbours.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Sir, I will take only five minutes. Sir, I have heard two Members on the non-official side who opposed the motion, and I have heard the two Members of the official benches who are at one with me. I am indeed glad that every word that has fallen from them has gone to support my proposition.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—Not preventive.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—That the need for rural reconstruction and the manner in which rural reconstruction should proceed and the diseases that they are suffering from in the mental, physical and the social sphere are admitted. Now I turn round and ask, who has been in charge of the country so far? Have you not been in charge as servants of the Government to look after these?

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—Paid servants?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—You have been salaried and paid from the treasury! A certain number of people like you, all these years, have been paid for the purpose of looking after the needs and for the purpose of diagnosing, and for the purpose of curing these diseases. What have you done?

I don't want interruptions. You officials were here and you have been responsible for running the country properly unalloyed by any non official interference all these years. You say now food is insufficient; health bad; economic inefficiency and indebtedness, you admit; and you say the senses of the villager have to be roused and that initiative is wanting. I ask "who is responsible?" The Legislative Council came into existence only three years ago, and the constituencies are asked to send representatives only now. We ask you to-day to give the permission for a Central Board, which you advocated from the Medical seat. You have said that a Central Board with Government initiative is necessary to go into the whole question. I say give us a chance of guiding the Central Board. We do not want officials who have miserably failed in the past! Let us have a chance. If you condemn us before you give usachance, what can we do? We can carry to the very door of the ryots co-operation. The principle is advocated by Sir Vincent as mentioned by the Hon'ble Member fot Vyttila "we don't want committees of such kind, but we want earnest men who have tackled this problem." These propositions should be discussed in a Central

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Board and we should take the initiative by going into the villages to take these principles there and invite the co-operation of the Panchayatdars. Give us that Central Board and we shall place before the House an exhaustive report within 12 months; before the coming budget session. We wish to make the Government's work lighter. And you say no! Because your abject callousness to do any good to the country in the past would be exposed! When you admit diseases and remedial measures and you object to a committee, I can see no reason except that you might be exposed! There is no good to act like that. Meet us fair and square. I will only ask for a committee with the minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 of which two will be the Agricultural Superintendent and myself who will go all over the country and understand the local needs. I will ask for a small committee in order that money need not be wasted. We shall dig deeply and all our suggestions shall be submitted before the Government within one year from the date of forming the committee and not as you took three years for the Special Finance Committee to submit a report. When you want to reform the salaries you appointed so many members and you took three years. I assure you that this committee, which is going to be formed, will lay before you definite remedial measures which can be adopted as practical steps before this time next year. I say before the House 'Give us a chance'. Before we formed a part of the Government, and became responsible ostensibly at least, after the Legislative Council came into existence, we had not the chance of shouldering the responsibilities, and when we come to shoulder the responsibilities you refuse us responsibility. You talk of irrigation. Why did you not get an irrigation expert even before this? I shall carry this House with me in this respect, with the intention of doing some good to the poor, whose wants are many and which are in urgent need of remedy. With these words, I put the proposition before the House for a division.

President.—The question before the House is "that a committee for the purpose of framing a comprehensive scheme of rural reconstruction for the villages of Cochin be appointed."

(*Question put and agreed to*).

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Sir, I at once mention the personnel of the committee.

(1) Mr. I. Raman Menon
(2) ,, E. Ikkanda Warriar
(3) ,, V. V. Anantapadmanabha Ayyar
(4) Mr. I. E. Amboken,
(5) and myself.

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Dr. A. R. Menon.—I oppose the statement. We are only for a committee of three Members as the Hon'ble Member has mentioned before.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—I shall explain how this occurred, Sir. Originally we were only for three Members, but some were of opinion that five would be much better. I am quite satisfied with two Members and myself. If the Hon'ble Members are not anxious, as I suggested, we shall reduce the number to three. Even then we can do the work satisfactorily within twelve months.

Mr. I. E. Ambooken.—I am not anxious, I withdraw.

Mr. V. V. Anantapadmanaha Ayyar.—I too am not very anxious about it. I withdraw.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar.—I too am not very anxious.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—Then why should you have Members who are not very anxious?

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar.—I am not anxious, but I am ready to serve the country in whatever capacity I am called to do so.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—I beg to second it, Sir.

Motions put and agreed to.

6. Consideration of the Finance Committee Report.

President.—Resolution No. 6.

Mr. C. J. Mathew.—Sir, I withdraw.

Hence the following resolution was considered withdrawn:—

"This House recommends to the Government that, in view of the very short time the members are afforded for the study of the report submitted by the Special Finance Committee and also because of the complexity of the matters contained therein, the discussion of the report may be postponed to another date and not held during this forthcoming budget session."

7. Economic Development Committee.

Mr. T. A. Ramachandra Ayyar.—"This Council strongly recommends to the Government that, for the economic development of the State, a committee with a non-official majority be appointed to draw up a programme of irrigation works to be undertaken in the near future."

I formally move this resolution. This was talked out in this House several times during the last Legislative Council. Government opposed it but it was carried unanimously by all the non-official Members. Then again, Government vetoed it. So I am not going to make a long speech. Before proceeding, I want to know the attitude of the Government regarding this.

Mr. A. Eachara Menon.—I beg to second it.

Rao Bahadur Mr. John Kuriyan.—I rise to oppose this motion.

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